

BUONAMICO

A Legend of FLORENCE



BY EDITH M. THOMAS.

HEN Monte Morello is capped with snow,
And the wind from the north comes whistling down,
It is chill to rise with the morning-star,
In the "City of Flowers"—in Florence town.

II.

Light is the sleep of the old, for they know
How brief are their few remaining days;
But when hearts are young, sleep lingers long,
And too sweet to leave are the dream ways.

III.

So, Tafi, the master, awoke with the light,
But the prentice lad, Buonamico, was young,
And his dreaming ears were loath to hear
The daybreak bell's awakening tongue.

IV.

For it seemed to speak with old Tafi's voice,
"Colors to grind, and the shop to be swept!"
Then, out of his bed, on the bare stone floor,
Poor Buonamico, shivering, crept.

V.

Busy all day with his quick young hands,—
Busy his thoughts with a project bold.
"The master will find," he said to himself,
"'T is not well to work in the dark and
the cold!"

VI.

But the master, unheeding the prentice lad,
Matched the mosaics fine and quaint;
Till his tablets of stone revealed the forms
Of Mother and Child, of cherub and saint.

VII.

Buonamico, meanwhile, forsook his tasks,
And, prying in crevice of wall or ground,
With a patience and skill boys only know,
Thirty great beetles the truant found.

VIII.

As many wax tapers, then, he took —
 Thirty small tapers (nor less, nor more),
 And presto! each beetle, clumsy and slow,
 On its broad black back a candle bore.

IX.

Next morning, ere dawn, when Tafi awoke,
 Ere his lips could frame their usual call,
 A sight he beheld that froze his veins —
 An impish procession of tapers small!

X.

Slowly they came, and slowly went
 (And they seemed to pass through a crack
 'neath the door):
 So slowly they moved, he
 counted them all,
 Thirty they numbered, nor
 less, nor more!

XI.

"Surely, some evil
 these hands
 have wrought,
 That the powers
 of darkness in-
 vade my cell!"
 And many an *Ave*
 the master said,
 To reverse and
 undo the un-
 holy spell.

XII.

When daylight was
 come, Buon-
 amico he told:
 "A good lad ever
 thou wert, and
 indeed,
 Wise for thy years;
 and, therefore,
 speak out,
 And, as best thou
 canst, this mys-
 tery read."

XIII.

"May it not be," Buonamico said,
 "The powers of darkness that good men hate,
 Are vexed with my master, who falters not
 In faithful service, early and late?"

XIV.

"Ay, that they are," said the master, "no
 doubt!"
 Said the prentice-boy, "*Their* time is
 night;
 And it *may* be they like not this wondrous
 work,
 Which thou risest to do ere peep of light!"

XV.

"Well hast thou counseled," the master re-
 plied,
 "So young of years — so sage in thy thought;
 I will rise no more ere the day hath dawned —
 A work of light should in light be wrought!"



"A SIGHT HE BEHELD THAT FROZE HIS VEINS —
 AN IMPISH PROCESSION OF TAPERS SMALL!"

XVI.

Thus runs the legend, which also saith
 Spite of his pranks Buonamico became,
 When the years were fled, and Tafi was gone,
 A painter who rivaled his master's fame.